



Seunpde
Issue III

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Issue III sees Semple Magazine explore what it means to be a woman...

She is a friend, a daughter, a partner and a fighter. A force to be reckoned with and the Empress of her own destiny. A powerful being, whose beauty far surpasses the physicalities of the female form. Complex, complicated and challenging, a woman leaves her mark on the world the moment her gender is determined.

I am woman: hear me roar.

Sophie

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WHAT MAKES A WOMAN BEAUTIFUL

MARNI BANKS



Artwork by Loiuse Henderson

Do you remember being in school and being envious of a group of girls who were seen as ‘popular’ just because they were pretty and conceited? Unfortunately, it looks as if the power of being beautiful doesn’t diminish as you get older. In 2013, Gwyneth Paltrow was named the ‘world’s most beautiful woman’. Her features were praised by scientists who explained that ‘she is a perfect example of a beautiful but slightly atypical face’, while personal trainers commended her body, stating that Gwyneth is ‘in great shape and has excellent posture and poise’. As flattering as this must have been for Ms Paltrow, what it told the rest of us women is that beauty is measured by physical attributes. Well, this is where the myth stops. I am going to hush the world’s scientists, personal trainers and make-up artists, and start telling you what really makes a woman beautiful.

If you look back to the Victorian era, women with a pale complexion were seen as beautiful, as they were too rich to have to spend hours outdoors. Contrary to today’s ideal, where bronzed is beautiful, in those days the paler you were, the more attractive you were. Likewise, size was an impressive and attractive attribute for the Victorians. Larger ladies with fuller figures were classed as beautiful, as their shape signalled wealth and fine dining. This could not be further from today’s unhealthy obsession with being skinny and sporting ‘the gap’ – a

visible space between the thighs on a female body. ‘The gap’ is indicative of an ultra-slim figure and is considered to be sexy by some.

These radical changes demonstrate that society has never settled on one ideal ‘look’ and, if we can’t make our minds up, I say we need to let go of the appearance complex and think about what truly makes a woman beautiful.

“Wrinkles may be recognised as ‘beautiful’, as they are a sign of laughter, experience and energy”

Studies show that when we recognise a face as ‘beautiful’ we are actually making a judgement about the health and vitality of that individual. A healthy lifestyle, which can include anything from moderate indulgences with friends to generous intakes of fresh air, will be immediately apparent in a woman. Studies have also shown that wrinkles may be recognised as ‘beautiful’, as they are a sign of laughter, experience and energy. So really when we see someone who we think is particularly attractive, we are making an admiring judgement about their life and wellbeing. Your life makes you beautiful,

so embrace every moment and enjoy it. The age-old saying ‘Beauty is only skin-deep’ suggests that our attractive qualities are rooted in our personality and our heart. Findings support this, revealing that honest and helpful people are viewed as attractive, while rude and unfair people are deemed unattractive. The way in which a woman deals with situations, communicates her thoughts and opinions, and expresses her passions and commitment will all combine to make her look more attractive than any concealer or lipstick ever could. It’s time to replace your cosmetics with generosity, kindness and grace.

This issue of ‘Semple Magazine’ talks through many of the reasons why women are beautiful: they are loving friends, kind daughters and natural mothers; they can drive safely, dress androgynously and demonstrate true talent. A beautiful woman is a force to be reckoned with. She is a woman who is confident, successful and caring in all aspects of her life. There is no denying that your physical attributes play a part in how attractive you are, but without embracing life, these features would be left untapped and therefore useless. After all, you can’t smile without having something make you laugh, your eyes won’t light up without feeling proud, and you will never believe in beauty unless you appreciate everything you have in life this very minute.

A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND THE SISTER YOU CHOOSE YOURSELF

SOPHIE MAGUIRE

C ompromise, trust and growth allow friendships to last through decades and the inevitable changes that life throws in their way. But, in the complicated trials and tribulations of our own lives, we can sometimes forget how precious a thing it is to be a best friend and to have one in return. As time passes and the years of friendship rack up, we sometimes begin to take each other for granted.

“Being a best friend means making an effort without being asked”

A loyal friendship was easy to maintain when both of you were in school, when real responsibilities didn't plague you and when the entirety of your time was theirs alone. It becomes far more challenging, though, as you take different life paths: university, careers, love and heartbreak, new friendship groups, marriages, perhaps divorces and children. It is during these sometimes difficult and trying times that maintaining intimacy with your best friend requires a serious investment. Yet when life steps in between, attempting to prise you apart, that's when you need each other most.

Being a best friend means making an effort without being asked. It means fully

acknowledging your role as a confidante and platonic partner and understanding that a friendship will not always run smoothly; that it needs actively working on just as romantic relationships do. This is an essential part of being a best friend. You will have countless disagreements; you will want different things for yourself – and for them too; and you will fight. But you must always fight hardest for each other. Allow yourselves to argue and take time out of your friendship if it's needed; it is no more out of place to take a break here than it would be in a marriage.

“Best friends are the keepers of each other’s secrets”

Remember, you are two entirely separate entities and being a best friend means being willing to learn and adapt; recognising that you cannot control this other person or mould them into someone you want them to be, but instead accepting and loving them precisely because they are their own person.

Best friends are the keepers of each other’s secrets. They cry in front of each other, laugh uncontrollably together; they are able to be themselves with one another completely. They are there for the best of times and for the worst. They allow each other to make mistakes



Photography courtesy of Clare Maguire

and, after all is said and done, they will help rectify those mistakes. They permit each other growth and change, without judgement or expectation.

“Friendship demands work and commitment in order to thrive”

It may sound like a job, and in many ways it is. Friendship demands work and commitment in order to thrive. So admit when you’re wrong, make sacrifices when you must and come to understand that the decisions you may make for yourself and for your life might not be right for them – and that that is Ok.

Encourage, protect and most importantly always accept each other. Friends share the heavy burdens of life and make the journey that much more enjoyable and bearable. A friend is a gift – treasure them. Because, when the chips are down and you turn to that one person who will be there no matter what, free from judgement and pride, you cannot say it wasn’t worth the work.



IF THE SHOE FITS

A FASHION MEMOIR

SOPHIE MAGUIRE

From the moment I balanced my tiny feet in a pair of black satin slingbacks that belonged to my grandmother, I knew I was going to be hooked and that my shoe fetish had begun.

I knew then, at that moment, that I was destined to be a shoe fiend. My love affair with shoes began at an early age, it's true, but I can still remember 'my' first-ever pair of heels.

"I would wear them everywhere and anywhere, much to my mother's distaste"

The first pair of shoes that I bought with my hard-earned pocket money were strappy platforms covered in silver glitter; they were hideously fabulous and it was love at first sight. I would wear them everywhere and anywhere, much to my mother's distaste.

Thankfully, 12 years on, my taste has somewhat improved – but those ghastly metallic heels will forever hold fond memories and will always remain my favourite pair of shoes.

WHY WOMEN MAKE BETTER DRIVERS

MARNI BANKS



Artwork by Genevieve Daetwyler

The debate on the differences between men and women is as old as Adam and Eve. It is written in our DNA to differ from the opposite sex as much as it is to be compatible with one another. There is a male way of doing things and a female way of doing things and, as these are rarely similar, it is often the main cause of our bickering. If you are in a relationship, have grown up with a brother or have ever observed your father closely, you will notice how differently they go about everyday tasks... and especially when it comes to the invention that consists of four tyres and a steering wheel. The car is an incubator of bad habits and, let's shout it loud, ladies: however much men may argue with us, we are the better drivers.

“Men are guilty of 97% of dangerous driving offences”

Learning to drive is one of life's milestones, and as soon as you pass your test you feel like the world is yours to explore. There is nothing more satisfying than peeling off your L-plates and edging out of your driveway with no parent or driving instructor in sight. Stereotypically, it might be said that boys have more of a knack when it comes to driving, having grown up playing with flashy toy cars and spending endless hours at Disneyland on the go-karts.

The facts even bear this out: the government Driving Standards Agency claims that men have a higher pass rate than women. But how many corners, traffic lights and motorways does it take before the mandatory protocols required in driving fade and bad habits take over? 'Mirror, signal, manoeuvre' are those three words you tattoo into your mind when learning to drive, but do you still whisper them to yourself as a driver now?

The answer is, girls do and boys don't, as extensive research has demonstrated. Results from the Home Office reveal some staggering statistics. Men are guilty of 97% of dangerous driving offences, and overall commit nine times more traffic offences than women. And if that's not harrowing enough, in 2008 more than 80% of all charges of drinking while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, careless driving, speeding offences and neglecting traffic signs were brought against men. While this doesn't render women faultless, it certainly reveals some truths about men behind the wheel.

So we may drive more slowly and take longer to park, but ladies will always put sense before speed and this care and attention gives us an advantage when it comes to insurance premiums. Drive Like a Girl is a company set up in 2013 to 'help young female drivers beat the price hike in car insurance caused by the EU

Gender Directive'. We asked spokeswoman Charlotte Halkett who she thought would win the medal for safest driver, based on the in-car technology they install to check how well their customers drive.

“There is a male way of doing things and a female way of doing things”

Young women are definitely safer on average than men of the same age – they're more cautious and aware of the risks. We know this because Drive Like a Girl and its sister brand Insurethebox put little boxes behind customers' dashboards to monitor driving and reward safe motoring...Boys may be at least as skilful, but they can be over-confident and sometimes get a buzz out of driving too fast. That's why girls are safer and less likely to cause nasty accidents, and it's why we say it's a compliment to be told you "drive like a girl".

TAG YOU'RE IT

SOPHIE MAGUIRE

There are times in one's life when for whatever reason – workload, priorities, choice or heartbreak – one finds oneself single. And, despite the empowerment of women and the mantra of 'making it on your own', there is still a stigma attached to being a single woman. It can be hard to stand strong on your relationship choices, or circumstances, when friends continue to point out how you really should be dating again, or your family put pressure on you to settle down. After a few summer family get-togethers those dreaded and repeated remarks about 'babies' start to nibble away at your self-esteem and leave you feeling like a shrivelled-up spinster, destined to live a life consumed by a bitter hatred for love and surrounded by one too many cats.

When I found myself alone after a relationship that ended badly, I was faced with the world of dating; a world I was neither comfortable with nor ready for. Listening to my friends set out the rules of those cat-and-mouse dating games that I was being encouraged to embark on, I couldn't help but think: is there such a thing as an honest relationship any more? In a society where integrity is highly valued, why is it that when it comes to our relationships we skirt around the truth and play games?

Do we want the truth? Sure, on life-altering circumstances. 'I never want children' or, the dreaded, 'I don't love you any more' are truths

we want to be privy to. But do we really want to know that his mother hates us, that in fact our bum does look big in those jeans and that in reality he isn't going to call after that date, because... well, he just isn't that into you? As children we played games. Is adulthood just a series of cleverly thought-out moves? What if we were all honest all of the time? Can it work if we lay our cards on the table or is it simply safer, and smarter, to keep our game face?

Don't get me wrong, I love being in a relationship. When you find the right person and things are working, it's great. I could have thrown myself into a forced partnership of some kind to hush the fears of being left on the shelf. But I believe that when you do find yourself single, it can be the perfect opportunity to learn things about yourself you might otherwise have missed. It is important to learn to be alone, to accept yourself, to love yourself. It is important to utterly refuse to jump into a relationship, with most likely the wrong person at the wrong time, to satisfy others. Do not seek out companionship for companionship's sake. Wait. Wait for when it feels right for you, not for anyone else. Relationships are about sacrifice, time investment and life adjustments. So be ready and know who you are before you make room for someone else. That way when he, or she, does come along you will know it's real and, most importantly, an honest choice on your own terms.

THE ANDROGYNOUS BIRTH

ANISIA BUCUR

When thinking about fashion, a first spontaneous reaction might be to focus on its celebration of femininity and exaltation of women's beauty. We would then go on to think that fashion is, actually, also about men and the expression of their masculine beauty. But we would be wrong to stop here and believe that fashion only dresses two separate identities, that of 'man' and 'woman'. Rather, fashion has the potential to blur the lines between the two categories and reveal new ways of expressing our sexual identity.

Clothes and style are the most visible ways of expressing gender and because of this fashion has great power to reshape gender definitions. In the past 20 years, we have seen a veritable explosion of daring and androgynous designs.

Artwork by Katie Greenwood



They deconstruct myths about what it means to be a woman with style or a fashionable man. Women are going masculine, men are going feminine and the androgynous style is booming.

“Fashion has great power to reshape gender definitions”

Women wearing trousers in a man-like fashion was a more-than-radical attitude back in the 1900s, when feminist ‘suffragettes’ were fighting for their right to vote. Trousers were a sign of emancipation and freedom. Later on, in the 1920s, Coco Chanel democratised trousers for women to liberate them from the corsets and heavy underclothes they previously had to wear.

Today, fashion is being even bolder in designing female clothes with typically masculine cuts. The archetypal blazer, the declension of the tie, the reinterpretation of brogues and the reshaping of trilby hats are all markers of women adopting masculine attitudes. What fashion is doing here is to defy norms. It challenges any clear-cut distinction between men and women, highlighting the similarities between genders and how interchangeable their attributes actually are.

If we stroll through history, we notice many examples of similar trends in men’s attire. In earlier centuries privileged men in royal courts actually wore heels and long-haired wigs; a prominent figure being the French King Louis XIV. The 1970s and 1980s saw cross-dressing take centre-stage with David Bowie’s feminine style or Boy George’s extravagant clothes and make-up. But in the last ten years, this subversion of male stereotypes has become increasingly subtle. It is not just about make-up, long hair or high heels. Rather, it is about men who simply do not show a rough and wannabe-virile attitude. Masculine fashion reinterprets skirts, dresses, hairstyles, facial characteristics and body shapes to create a smooth and more feminine allure to men. Blurring the lines in this way reveals that ‘women going masculine’ is not the only emancipatory thing to do. Men displaying women’s attributes implies, once again, their need to express a degree of gender ambiguity.

When women adopt masculine features and men start wearing feminine-inspired clothes, a new kind of ‘fashion philosophy’ is born: an androgynous style in its own right. It is clearly not just about women borrowing masculine shirts or men playing around with skirts; it is actually merging the two genders into one. It captures that moment when you cannot tell the difference any more between a male and a female body. Androgynous fashion challenges

gender stereotypes. It raises the possibility of people being sexually fluid rather than bound to a single gender with a discrete set of ascribed tastes and ways to dress. Does this mean we have lost something along the way? Not at all. It simply means that an alternative has been embraced. It does not exclude femininity nor does it erase masculinity. Instead it allows for a space where people are not restricted and can start expressing themselves in more ‘fluid fashions’.

“A new kind of ‘fashion philosophy’ is born”

The blurring of gender lines in fashion does not merely reflect an aesthetic whim. It reveals a need to present an authentic self to others. This ‘self’ is not just a woman or a man. It is more than that and it can be a bit of both. Fashion offers a space where an alternative can be embraced. The power of blurring the lines allows the challenging of gender definitions. It enables us to express a more fluid identity that is able to shift from femininity to masculinity. Ultimately, it shows how ambiguous and complex we actually are. Yet again, this does not mean that something is lost along the way. Quite the opposite: fashion offers the possibility of forever-renewable fluid expressions of gender.

BOOTY AND BEAUTY OVER TALENT AND TASTE

SOPHIE SEYMOUR

You've only got to listen to the current top ten to recognise that the artists tend to fall into two clear categories. Firstly there are men, typically part of a band, who are for the most part left to dress as they choose, being recognised for their musical talent. Think Mumford & Sons, Bastille, Imagine Dragons et cetera and you're on the right track. Secondly, there are female singers, who perform tracks that have largely been written by others for the sole purpose of chart success. The latter group are scantily clad and famous for their defining body parts.

“Her career should not be governed by how much flesh she flashes”

When was it decided, or rather assumed, that a female musician will be marketed in a certain way to ensure that 'sex sells'? Surely if the artist has all the other necessary talents for fame then her career should not be governed by how much flesh she flashes? However, in a society that expects and demands celebrities to look and act in a certain way, it would seem a considerable risk to attempt to break out of the typical mould of the female star. To do so might ironically prove more shocking than to continue along the ever-more-skimpily dressed route. So immense is the pressure to dress a certain way that even Madonna,

despite her longstanding musical career, is still insisting on cavorting around in little more than her underwear, despite being a mother over the age of fifty.

It is important not to deny that male musicians surely face similar pressures; we are all aware of the typical ‘poster boy’ good looks that are part and parcel of many bands’ fame. However, it is the extreme pressure heaped on women which divides the two genders. The importance placed upon looks is far greater for the female, as they constitute such a defining part of her image. For males within the industry, by contrast, good looks seem to be merely a bonus – an easy way of securing a gaggle of obsessive fans who will relentlessly buy associated merchandise and scream wildly.

In the case of a mixed-gender group, the pressure appears to decrease, as with popular bands such as The Lumineers and Paramore. Here, there is typically only one female within a band, the remaining (male) members dissipating much of the pressure that might have otherwise been exerted. The focus remains on the music itself and the skill of the band, and few or no corsets or hot-pants are required.

Songstress Kate Nash recently spoke out about her distaste for the intense focus on looks and

body size within the music industry, arguing that when the media slate the looks of a particular singer they are simultaneously insulting any audience members of a similar build. The quirky singer appealed for publications to focus on the talent and objectives of each individual, ditching the information regarding age and weight for something with a little more gravitas.

“So immense is the pressure to dress a certain way”

Sadly, our current music industry feeds many of the same issues associated with celebrity life in other sectors. Body dysmorphia, eating disorders and exhaustion are increasingly common – the notion of ‘car crash’ fame, in which the general public observe the rise and fall of an individual, is a phenomenon that will not go away as long as the industry remains in its current state. Britney Spears is the classic example; a young innocent girl who rapidly rose to fame before it destroyed her. When Britney first appeared few would have suspected that she would later make headlines for drug abuse, violence, emotional breakdown and manically cutting off her long blonde locks.

In an ideal world, popular culture would be full of responsible personalities like Kate Nash, who are conscious of the image they portray and

castigate the media when they cruelly home in on shallow flaws. Instead, however, the picture is more one of artists who tirelessly post photographs on various social media platforms, proudly displaying their fondness for drug use, tendencies to wear very little clothing, and pursuit of relationships that are publicly known to be violently abusive.

“They cruelly home in on shallow flaws”

Yet there are two key female artists who have bucked the trend over the past few years. Both Adele and Florence Welch have achieved high levels of fame. And it is their clear vision and undeniable vocal skills that have defined their careers, as opposed to their flesh, proving that there is another way, which does not involve being pictured on the front cover of Playboy.

Undoubtedly, presentation and style will always be an appealing, glamorous aspect of the music business; but I would argue that what is required to change the current state of affairs is to market artists with a greater degree of taste. It’s true that sex sells, but it is my firm opinion that talent and taste will always hold far more value.

I'LL BE SEEING YOU...





In all the old
familiar places...













That this heart of
mine
embraces.

THE WAY WE WERE

WOMEN OF THE 1940s

SOPHIE MAGUIRE

It's the 1940s and women are being hired to work as part of the war effort, finally seen as capable of doing a man's work. Hooray, how very progressive of you, sir!

Like their soldier brothers, the majority of women left ordinary lives to do extraordinary things. Working in difficult and dangerous conditions, often at the limits of their physical ability, women found they were able to accomplish tasks they never imagined possible.

“These women were the home half of the greatest generation”

The motto of the time was ‘Make do and mend’ – or should that have been ‘Put up or shut up’? Dresses were replaced by overalls and slacks, sensible flats overtook heels and hair was tied up in scarves; these women meant business. Coping without husbands, feeding a family on rations, working long hours and keeping the home fires burning all meant the life of a 1940s woman was a hard slog, yet one that was met with gusto and patriotic pride.

These women were the home half of the greatest generation and they too helped win WWII. Yet after the war ended and the men were back from fighting, most



Artwork by Tally Thompson

women were encouraged to return home to their husbands, to find more suitable 'female jobs' and to go back to sitting pretty.

During the 40s women had saved much of their wages, since there was little to buy during the war, and it was this money that helped launch their prosperity during the 1950s. Not content with the submissive domestic lifestyle of a stay-at-home wife, the women who had proved that they could do the job, and do it well, set about making their mark. It didn't happen over night though, it wasn't until the late 70s that women began to once again make gain in the workplace. It was a bumpy, and some would say unfinished, journey to be valued and accepted in a male dominated world, but it was a journey that was met with determination and drive by women that chose victory over defeat.

MR RIGHT

VS

MR RIGHT NOW?

MARNI BANKS

Finding 'the one' is one of the most perfect and precious things in life. That one person who throws a blanket over you when you fall asleep in front of the TV, pours you a cup of tea in the morning before you wake up and replaces your perfume before the bottle runs dry. They are the one special person who brings a smile to your face before they've even made you laugh. I'm the first to admit that I'm a hopeless romantic, but in a world full of tradition, how does even the most cynical of lovers know if the person they are with is a fling or their future?

It seems that as you get older, the circumstances change. You begin in your

teens, teetering through life on your first pair of high heels, a head full of dreams; it's a time when love is unknown territory. Then, as you hit your twenties, the boy who once sat next to you in class is now the one seeing you through your degree and carrying those very heels after a night out. And before you know it, unless you and he have settled into a cosy nest, you'll be questioned 'Where is this going?' With the biological clock ticking and your thirties looming, you find yourself facing an ultimatum. Is he 'the one'?

We are saturated in a culture of romantic films and novels. They present to us the image of a Prince Charming who ticks all the boxes: the ultimate in perfection. He has a gorgeous head of hair; he is tall, dark and handsome; he provides for you, giving you a healthy, comfortable and stable lifestyle. It is this very 'Cinderella'-style narrative that makes us feel the pressure to tie the knot by the age of 30. Recent figures from the Office for National Statistics show that the average age at which men get married is now 30.8 years, while women are typically aged 28.9 years when they make their vows. But do you think you definitely have to be settled with your soulmate by the big 3-0?

Trying to decide if he is 'the one' is daunting and can make you feel like all the walls are closing in. But don't panic, because all you

need to do is take a step back and think about what 'Mr Right' actually means. This is well illustrated in *The Notebook*, a romantic novel and successful film which tells the story of Allie, a young girl who is torn between Noah, a passionate but poor man, and Lon Hammond, a soldier who is fit, wealthy and well-connected. Lon gives Allie everything she has ever dreamed of: the clothes, the glamorous nights out, the luxury lifestyle.

But eventually she realises that no amount of money and stability will ever give her the happiness that happy-go-lucky, free-spirited Noah can. Mr Right is no longer the fantasy handsome man who gets your father's approval because of his respected profession and promise to pay the mortgage.

We told you who Mr Right was at the very beginning of this feature – you just didn't see it. Mr Right is the man who makes you laugh and makes you feel the freedom within you. He is the man who makes you feel the world is yours to conquer, that rainy weather doesn't mean staying inside all day and that your biggest fears are actually just adventures yet to be discovered. Infatuation is when you find somebody who is absolutely perfect. Love is when you realise that they aren't but it doesn't matter.

TREASURED GARMENT

INTERVIEWED BY

SAMANTHA

VANDERSTEEN

Louisa Lau is editor of online magazine Lust & Found and art director of Beach Tomato and Black Tomato. We caught up with Louisa to find out a bit more about her life in fashion.

Could you tell us a bit about your childhood? Where did you grow up?

I grew up in various parts of north London: Camden Town, Willesden Green, then settling in North Finchley. It was pretty suburban – so no idyllic tales of frolicking in the woods, I'm afraid. I like to think being surrounded by punks as a toddler influenced my teenage fascination with punk, DIY and sub-cultures.

Photography courtesy of Louisa Lau



Were you always interested in fashion?

Funnily enough, no. I was a bit of a tomboy and fully embraced punk and hardcore from the age of 13 (to my parents' disgust), so never cared for high fashion, particularly haute couture and ready-to-wear. Pretty much the polar opposite to Susie [Susie Lau of fashion blog Style Bubble is Louisa's sister], who worshipped Vogue and the escapism of runway fashion. I did enjoy expressing myself through clothes but it was more about DIY culture, customising vintage clothing, and less about consuming, for me; I guess I was more about creating an aesthetic. This mentality changed at the age of 15 when I discovered lifestyle publications such as The Face, i-D, Sleazeration and Dazed & Confused, which talked about alternative counter-cultures in a trendy way. Also American teen mags like Teen Vogue, Nylon and Elle Girl helped moderate my darker tastes.

How does fashion translate into your everyday life?

My plans for the day usually dictate what I wear; most importantly what shoes are the most practical. If I have an event to attend, I'll either wear something to suit all occasions (something I've yet to master) or a statement piece. These days, I am more likely to wear something plain which is transformed by a pair of killer shoes or statement jewellery.

What is a typical day like for you as art director of Beach Tomato and Black Tomato?

As art director I spend a lot of time going through areas of the business that can be improved aesthetically. This could be anything from reviewing the printed travel documents our clients receive to designing a new website or Facebook app, sending a newsletter to print or organising a photoshoot. I recently finished an intensive video-editing course, so very soon I'll add that to my résumé of skills. My job is so varied; no two days are ever the same.

You must be very busy, how would you dress for a typical day at work?

My working day can be unpredictable so I have to dress to accommodate that. Everyone at the office is quite casual but I do like to make an effort. It's mostly for self-confidence – having the 'right' shirt or a chic pair of shoes just seems to put me in the right frame of mind to get things done. Also as a senior member of staff I do feel proud of my position and feel I should set an example to the team and interns. I like to dress down at the weekends but trainers and T-shirts just don't cut it for workwear. Normally I would wear ankle boots or flat shoes, skinny jeans, a nice crisp silk shirt and one of my many coats or leather jackets.

Do you think you should fit fashion around your life or does your life fit around fashion?

Fashion definitely fits around my life, and that's my opinion, but most people at work would probably beg to differ. I don't think anyone 'should' do one or the other though, as it's a subjective concept. What I deem to be fashion fitting around my life could be considered by others as extravagant and fitting life around fashion.

What is your most treasured garment?

I go through phases of liking pieces more than others. But it would be safe to say that between us my boyfriend and I have a pretty awesome collection of Christopher Kane, particularly his Resort 2011 Nebula collection and Resort 2010 Atomic Bomb collection. The prints are just so amazing and non-season-specific. I guess if I had to choose it would be my Christopher Kane Resort 2010 cloud biker jacket.

What's the story behind it?

I remember trying it on in Liberty and it really was love at first sight. I wear a lot of biker jackets and the vivid photographic prints are stunning (even though I'm not your typical print girl), so it was a win-win combination of the two. Two seasons later, my boyfriend and I went to the Christopher Kane sample sale and the jacket



Photography courtesy of Louisa Lau

was there, one size left. I tried it on, already with the intention of buying it without a doubt. I think at that point it was the most I had spent on a single piece of clothing. I can still remember my hands shaking as I handed over my debit card.

Can you tell us a favourite memory of wearing it?

It was at my first official London Fashion Week when I was working at Cent magazine as their digital editor. It was probably the only designer piece in my outfit, but it still felt amazing.

Any items you never wear but can't bear to part with?

Very few as I now only buy clothes that I know I'll wear. I rarely buy quick-fix high-street stuff any more, and so wait at least a few weeks to consider buying a designer investment piece. I prefer it that way as it feels more like a commitment and less like an impulse buy. I moved a few months ago, and having accumulated a lot of clothes in my previous flat, I had to get rid of unworn pieces. All the clothes I've bought and have not worn have been sold on Pinterest, eBay or mostly at my sister's yard sale last summer.



Have you ever thrown an item of clothing away and regretted it?

I never throw away clothes; I always try to sell them or at least give to charity. One man's junk is another man's treasure.

Who are your favourite designers?

I just went to Antwerp for their stock sales so am really loving the clean minimal vibe with a grungy twist. I worship Ann-Sofie Back, Carin Wester, Ann Demeulemeester, Martin Margiela and Acne, but I also champion and wear a lot of London designers such as Charlie May, Draw in Light, Antipodium and Claudia Ligari.

Fashion: serious business or just a bit of fun?

For me it's both. I take it as seriously as a collector would prize his favourite piece of art; favouring quality and aesthetic appeal over trend. But then it's also a great medium to express your personality, projecting yourself. It's fun business.

Between yourself and your sister Susie, that must be an epic wardrobe? Do you often share clothes?

My wardrobe is not as extensive as you might think; Susie's definitely dwarfs mine. When we



Photography courtesy of Louisa Lau

were teenagers growing up, our styles were miles apart: she was much more girly and Japanese-influenced whereas I was a bit extreme and alternative. But Susie was always more frivolous with buying clothes, so more often than not I would borrow hers and then wear them in a completely different style to her.

Our style has changed a lot since then, but we're both a bit obsessed with coats, bike jackets and jumpers. So I guess our tastes cross over and we both have an eye for unusual details. The last thing I borrowed was her Christopher Kane AW10 floral dinner jacket, which I guarded with my life. Her shoe collection is what I lust after the most, but it is a shame – we can't share because my feet are two sizes bigger than hers. Whoever inherits it will be a very lucky girl.

ALL THAT GLITTERS 'AIN'T GOLD

HATTIE LEE

Equality is without doubt a high-profile issue in today's society but, whereas women strive for equal treatment in the workplace, in the political playground and even on the sports field, both they and men are arguably traditional when it comes to marriage.

Evidence suggests that the earliest use of the engagement ring was to denote ownership of a piece of property – symbolised by a circular band of rope or leather placed on the woman's finger. Although the meaning of the gift of an engagement ring has come a long way since then, its circular form has remained the same. The circle is a powerful symbol; it has no beginning and no end and thus represents eternity and an infinite unity. Additionally, the placing of the engagement ring on the fourth



Image courtesy of The London Victorian Ring Company

finger of the left hand is of key significance, and is a custom which goes back to the ancient Egyptians. They, and others until the development of modern medicine, believed that the left hand held the only vein that connected directly to the heart. This was later known as the 'vena amoris': the vein of love.

However, even if they are loth to admit it, the majority of twenty-first century women would be disappointed if their engagement ring was sparkle-free. I would even suggest that if men decided to present women with pieces of rope for rings today, many more proposals would end in rejection. However, the inclusion of diamonds in engagement rings did not become mainstream until the eighteenth century, when vast diamond deposits were discovered in South Africa and became readily available at a relatively low cost. It was during this time that the Tiffany setting moved centre-stage and our interest in serious carats was born.

The Tiffany setting positions the diamond high above the band, which allows greater amounts of light to pass through it, so the precious stone can take pride of place on a woman's hand. The designer of this creation, Charles Lewis Tiffany, wanted a platform to showcase his jewellery and capitalise on the diamond's growing associations with strength and everlasting love. However, if I were to pinpoint a time in the engagement ring's history when connotations

of flamboyancy and wealth overtook those of eternal love, this would be it. Unwittingly, Tiffany's design altered society's perceptions of the engagement ring and the size and quality of the diamond came to be more prized than its symbolism of the strength of the bond between man and woman.

"The circle is a powerful symbol; it has no beginning and no end"

The Romantic movement of the early nineteenth century, along with the young Queen Victoria, who was renowned for her passion for sentimental jewels, also fuelled the British love of diamonds. As Europe prospered, the diamond flourished and modern traditions such as the three-stone diamond ring and the 'gypsy' setting, in which the diamonds are set in a gold band, became popular.

However, the increasing popularity and overwhelming demand for diamonds is not without consequences. The diamond industry has been described by many as lucrative, highly dangerous and rife with child labour. Although it is illegal in most countries to employ anyone under the age of 18 in diamond mines, Liberia's Ministry of Lands – to cite just one example – believes that at least 1,500 children are currently working in Liberian diamond mines.

Mine operators want to hire children because they can easily fit into tight spaces and narrow tunnels and, with 95% of the Liberian population living on less than £1.29 a day, the prospect of earning around £32 for each diamond found is too tempting for many. This is obviously an undesirable consequence of our desire for diamonds and, ironically, is not one which glistens with love.

"The earliest use of the engagement ring was to denote ownership of a piece of property"

A woman's perception of the engagement ring is also arguably different to a man's. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in a recent study almost three-quarters of British men questioned believed they should be the ones to propose, while only 31% of women thought their partners would accept a marriage proposal from them. Within the first few moments of seeing the ring, a woman will form an emotional attachment to it and will associate it with her fiancé, whereas men have been known to reuse the ring if the engagement is broken off. Perhaps this is because in today's society men are under increasing pressure to spend the 'recommended' one to three months' salary on a ring, so its monetary value has come to overshadow its emotional significance.

Another interesting aspect of the engagement ring in terms of equality is that unlike the wedding band, which nowadays is usually worn by both husband and wife to symbolise their union, the engagement ring is still primarily only worn by women. This is no doubt a tradition which dates back to ancient times, where the man used the symbol of the ring to assert his ownership of the woman. It also goes to show how enduring marriage traditions are compared to the traditions in other areas of our lives.

“Only 31% of women thought their partners would accept a marriage proposal from them”

Although women no longer see themselves as chattels, they do still wear their engagement ring with pride, as a sign of their everlasting commitment. The rope or leather band has morphed into a sparkling beacon of hope and promise. But we must take care not to get swept up in the glamour of the engagement ring, and forget there is more to marriage than an expensive piece of jewellery. The engagement ring is undoubtedly one of the most powerful symbols of love, and this meaning must not be forgotten.



Image courtesy of The London Victorian Ring Company

MAYBE BABY

LOUISE HAYWARD

Does the perfect time to start a family truly exist? It may seem as if there are 101 factors that you should be considering before you even begin to think about pregnancy – and you would be right, you should consider them – but none of them should individually define the right time to bring a child into the world. However, with the biological clock present in every woman's thoughts, the pressure to conceive mounts as the years pass.

There is a vast amount of medical literature indicating that fertility declines as we get older. Yet the media emphasis on this fact puts excessive pressure on young women today, making them believe that they need to have babies as soon as possible to ensure that they don't struggle to conceive later on in life. However, although medical research makes a strong case, there are other factors that could be contributing to the number of young mothers in Britain.

The recent 'young mum' reality television shows, including 'Teen Mom' and '16 and Pregnant', are produced to show the challenge of life as a young mother and the sometimes harsh realities of having a child before you are ready. These realities include financial struggles, relationship breakdowns, the complications and pain associated with childbirth and the all-important question

'How do I tell my parents?' However, these shows have had a somewhat unexpected effect, by turning the young mothers into minor celebrities and catapulting them into 'role model' territory in the media. Are there really young women and girls out there aspiring to be like these reality stars and start their own families before they've even begun adult life, on the premise that it looks pretty easy on television?

One thing these programmes fail to acknowledge is the physical and medical benefits of having children earlier in life. Many physicians and researchers suggest that the ages of 20 to 24 are the peak of a woman's fertility, while from 30 to 35 women may begin to struggle to conceive naturally. Surely this is a fact to be aware of? Women are born with a limited supply of eggs, around two million or so, and according to experts at Edinburgh University, at puberty, only about 300,000 to 400,000 of a woman's eggs remain and from then on around 1,000 die during each menstrual cycle until the menopause. By the age of 30 a woman can be left with as little as 2% of her egg count, lending to a drastic reduction in the number of viable eggs for healthy conception.

Nevertheless, it is still perfectly possible for women over the age of 35 to conceive naturally and go on to have completely healthy



Artwork by Jose Luengo

pregnancies and babies. Recent figures from the Office of National Statistics suggest women are choosing to become mothers later, with the number of pregnancies in girls under the age of 18 at its lowest since records began and the average age of first-time mothers now up to 27.9 years. Many women choose to wait to start a family, and for many different reasons. Rushing into a pregnancy, when you are neither emotionally nor financially stable, is not a good way to beat the biological clock. Yet neither is holding off for too long for the elusive, 'perfect' moment.

The philosopher Rabindranath Tagore once said: 'Every child comes with a message that God is not yet discouraged of man.' This idea, I believe, echoes the sentiment that a child is a blessing to anyone, regardless of the age at which we choose to bring it into the world and our lives. It is impossible to define the right time to have a baby. You might worry that you're not ready all the way up until your baby makes their appearance and then be surprised at how easily you take to being a mother. Equally, you might think you are 100% ready, having bought everything and read all the books, only to find yourself struggling to make the transition to motherhood. I know that I spent much of my own pregnancy doubting my maternal instincts, but since my little one came along, I've had no end of comments about how easily I've taken to it, and I would never have done it differently.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

SOPHIE SEYMOUR

In general, the male youth of today are wearing a delightfully dull combination of navy jeans, striped or checked shirts, and some form of horrendous loafers. Groups of 'lads' will appear to have been dressed together, possibly by their mothers. Few of them stand out, most opting for a generic look that will hopefully appeal to the broadest spectrum of women possible. And, as for the ladies, it seems that (showing) less is not more. Cleavage, midriff and legs, with the occasional flash of derrière, are most definitely on display. The rules of today seem to be that even if you don't have it, you should probably still flaunt it anyway.

However, the expectation that a man should be attracted to your inner beauty remains, just as in years gone by. He should really like you for simply being who you are, even if you just happen to be wearing nine layers of foundation, three sets of false eyelashes, a biscuit-scented fake tan and somebody else's hair clipped onto your head. Personally I can't imagine myself with skin the shade of clementines, and smelling like cookies would only make me peckish, but it would be ridiculous to deny that we all want to look our best.

It would be interesting if more old-fashioned values were revived in society. The notion of a man wooing his potential wife, meeting her first through his family, seeing her exclusively in

supervised situations wearing only his Sunday best and top hat... these are ideas which seem utterly archaic initially, yet nevertheless have a certain charm.

In the past a 'young lady' would have been a demure, elegant young woman and would have dressed modestly and beautifully. She would have been a well-behaved, innocent creature rather than someone who called her companions 'babes' and had lost count of her poorly chosen sexual partners. It's easy to see why many would argue that taking inspiration from the past holds considerable appeal and the idea of 'the good old days' rings true.

But it is too easy to idealise how life used to be in the days of wearing a ball-gown at breakfast, waiting for the 'man of your dreams' to miraculously appear, ready to sweep you off your feet and be the perfect hubby. Realistically, he probably had more mistresses than Hugh Grant and you'd just have had to like it or lump it, turning a blind eye and keeping yourself forever looking lovely, on the off-chance that he might fancy his wife for a change. No thank you.

Perhaps I'll stick to that other old saying, that 'you have to kiss a few frogs before you find your prince'. Maybe it isn't so inaccurate after all?

WHAT A LOVELY KOOPLE

SAMANTHA

VANDERSTEEN

We all learn from a young age that it is good to share. Parisian label The Kooples has taken this idea to a new level and built a whole fashion brand around it. If you haven't seen the label's achingly cool advertising campaigns, then where have you been? More importantly, you might be asking: 'Who are The Kooples?'

There is something undeniably chic about this brand. Maybe it is because it's the brainchild of three Parisians – who do aloof coolness better than anyone. Featuring real-life couples in its campaigns, its advertising demonstrates how well the men's and women's collections complement each other. And, even though the couples are real, they are no less cool for that.

Even Kate Moss and Jamie Hince would think twice about standing next to them.

The three Parisians behind the brand are brothers Alexandre, Laurent and Raphael Elica, who themselves grew up around fashion. Their parents, Tony and Georgette Elica, founded Comptoir des Cotonniers in 1995, a brand that focused on the idea of mothers and daughters sharing clothes. The Kooples takes this a step further with the idea that we can all borrow from each other's wardrobes. With Alexandre designing menswear and Laurent designing the womenswear, the brothers work closely to ensure the collections complement each other perfectly. The idea is that couples can shop together and co-ordinate their outfits and, by using similar shapes and styles, you can in theory interchange your clothes with those of your partner.

It is in essence a simple idea, but one that has struck a chord with the fashion world. The Kooples has spread beyond its Paris base to London, and now New York. The slightly preppy, 'androgynous with a hint of rock 'n' roll' look is popular with Londoners and New Yorkers, who have long since embraced the 'what's mine is yours' approach to dressing.

The main collections have the simple perfection that you would expect from a Parisian brand. Clean lines, sharp tailoring inspired by Savile

Row and always an androgynous edge. Blazers and skinnies are a key look for the label, which breaks up its clean lines with busy prints and colour. These clothes are fuss-free; if you were to buy the whole collection you could throw away the rest of your clothes and still be sorted for the coming season. Impossibly chic, this is the kind of collection that makes you feel that if you wore it you would be a better version of yourself; someone who was on time for appointments, never had to run for the bus and who could wear a white lace cardigan without spoiling it. OK, so that's quite a lot to expect from an outfit, but at the very least you would feel a much more polished, accomplished version of yourself.

More relaxed than their mainline collection, but just as stylish, is The Kooples SPORT. With a more casual silhouette featuring loose shirts, smart tracksuit trousers and even a hoodie or two, the SPORT collection is perfect for lazy weekends and Sunday brunches; all the while keeping in mind the interchangeable nature of the clothes.

The Kooples' collections may not come cheap, but a slice of Parisian cool is something you can't put a price on, and being able to swap your wardrobe with your other half means you do get more for your money. Now that's the kind of economics we can relate to.

SHE WAS
'ASKING FOR IT'
WHY SHOULD A DRESS CAUSE
DISTRESS?

SOPHIE MAGUIRE



Artwork by Emma Richardson

I read something the other day that really resonated with me. Picture this: a handsome young man sits on the nightly train home. The carriage is empty, the evening is dark and the walk home will be a deserted one. On his wrist he wears a striking Rolex watch; aesthetically pleasing, the watch gets him noticed. Then, on that dark desolate walk his vulnerability is taken advantage of. He is violated and robbed; stripped of his Rolex by some greedy opportunist with an eye for what is not his.

Now imagine he could never take that Rolex off, and every walk home or lonely train ride was accompanied by the fear of the watch attracting attention and being preyed upon. It is the same for us females. Women: aesthetically pleasing, often vulnerable and all too often taken advantage of because of these facts.

It struck me that a man proudly displaying his watch, who is subsequently robbed as a result, is seen as a victim. Yet too many people assume a woman dressing so as to display her body is 'asking for it'. I find it hard to believe, however, that any woman is asking to be attacked, sexually assaulted and used – any more than a man wishes to be beaten or robbed.

Many women's clothes are designed to highlight the female form; to flatter it. So should a woman wearing a low-cut top, which

highlights her bosom, or a form-fitting skirt, which defines her waist and elongates the legs, be treated as a target? Fashion and feminism are, for me, the perfect companions. Our clothes are an expression and extension of ourselves and as women we should be free to wear whatever we choose without fear of assault or harassment.

Much like the man with his Rolex, the woman is simply highlighting her assets. Why should this make her a target for sexually depraved, sadistic individuals? She should not be forced to bury her natural God-given form beneath layers of masculine clothing in order to appear less attractive and deter attention. Is she 'asking for it' because the skirt shows a little thigh? Does the Rolex scream 'Rob me!'? Does that glimpse of female flesh scream 'Rape me!?

"She should not be forced to bury her natural God-given form"

If you too fail to see how a shortened hemline or a deep V neckline can be to blame for any form of sexual abuse, then there is one organisation you really should be aware of. Slutwalk is a movement which sees women taking to the streets, marching in revealing clothes and even



Artwork by Emma Richardson

their underwear, and toting anti-rape crime signage in support of the notion that women should be free to dress how they feel. The movement started as a response to a Toronto police officer telling women that if they want to avoid getting raped 'they should stop dressing like sluts' – a distasteful and misogynistic term if ever there was one.

Slutwalk has given us the power to no longer be silenced. To no longer be condemned by the word 'slut', but to take back ownership of it and embrace it – removing the stigma attached to a term that come to be seen as a justification for sexual abuse against women. Sexual activity and clothing choices aside, and however many times you say yes, the time you say no should still mean no!

*"Does that glimpse of
female flesh scream
'Rape me!'"?*

According to figures from the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and the Office for National Statistics, only 1,070 rapists are convicted every year, despite up to 95,000 people, the vast majority of them women, reporting that they have been victims of a sexual crime. Other shocking statistics indicate that there are only 15 sexual assault referral centres in the UK; that 26% of people



Artwork by Emma Richardson

think a woman is responsible for her rape if she was wearing revealing clothing and 34% if she was flirting; and that one in three women will experience sexual assault in her lifetime.

Women do not deserve to be stripped of their dignity and violated because of their gender or their choice of attire. I have a problem with the phrase 'asking for it'.

*"Only 1,070 rapists are
convicted every year"*

No one, male or female, should be taken advantage of, sexually or otherwise. It is a human right to wear whatever one pleases, and to suggest women would deliberately encourage sexual abuse through their wardrobe choice is a staggeringly reactionary view which continues to astonish and disgust me. I hope that the world is listening, because my dress is not a yes!

Dear Diary

MARNI BANKS

Artwork by Godwin Oppong

I write in you every day. You listen but never criticise. You welcome each day with a fresh, crisp page and never turn your back on yesterday. You preserve my past and present; every wrinkle on your cover is a sign of our penmanship.

The notion of writing something down, expressing our hopes and fears and releasing our emotional energy through a pen is something women have done for centuries. Documenting our lives in order to piece together our past and present can be both sentimental and empowering. For some, a diary signifies a friendship and the ability to control feelings and thoughts. To others, it is a form of art, documenting inspirations and creative whims. Diaries can be both humorous and historically insightful, and more often than not you will find it is a woman's handwriting you are reading.

Some of the most pivotal moments in history have been discovered through the unveiling of a woman's diary. Perhaps the most famous of them all is the diary of Anne Frank, the young girl who fled her home in Amsterdam to hide from the Nazi régime. Her document is powerful, telling and an eloquent testament to the human spirit. Without her written words, her endurance and remarkable story would never have been known, allowing the vicissitudes of the war to erase her evidence of courage and humanity. The entries of Virginia

Woolf during her time as a writer and the unabridged journals of Sylvia Plath are further examples of the power of the diary, revealing and defining an appreciation for the masters behind literary works that continue to resonate today.

“Documenting our lives...can be both sentimental and empowering”

These women have provided us with an insight into their lives, fed us a taste of their creativity and told us of a past that would have otherwise vanished. Through the power of the diary, we are able to share their stories and relate to their emotions and experiences. But never would they have dreamt their stories would have such a powerful impact. Never were they to know that one day, their entries would be read. Just like most of us who keep a diary, we write without knowing who else is reading. But if our diaries are just for our own use, to read only at our own discretion, why do we do it?

Research from the American Psychological Association has found that the psychology behind writing down your daily encounters or even keeping clippings, notes and images is to ‘reduce intrusive and avoidant thoughts

about negative events and improve working memory’. Keeping diaries and journals is seen as an effort to change habits and attitudes so as to maintain a healthy and positive mindset. It has also been found that women are more reactive to stress than men and are therefore more likely to keep a diary in order to channel this energy and convert it into positive memories. Women document their lives to feel close to themselves, as a way of getting to know who they really are and to understand their identity.

“Every word we write is evidence of our being, a footprint on our journeyed life ”

However, it is not just diary authors who can learn from their entries. Since the release of Anne Frank’s diary, millions of people have been touched and moved by her story. A diary can ease someone’s suffering or allow the reader to empathise and explore their own emotions. Every word we write is evidence of our being, a footprint on our journeyed life, an echo of our voice; it is also a lesson to another. Although at present your diary may lack the oxygen of an audience, it will be cherished as a memory by loved ones, who will discover it when they most need it.

Psychologists have been studying diary entries for decades, and we each have our own unique reason as to why we keep them. But for me there is one person who summarises the purpose and art of journalling perfectly and that is none other than Virginia Woolf herself, in her own diary entry on 20 April 1919:

‘But what is more to the point is my belief that the habit of writing thus for my own eye only is good practice. It loosens the ligaments. Never mind the misses and the stumbles. Going at such a pace as I do I must make the most direct and instant shots at my object, and thus have to lay hands on words, choose them and shoot them with no more pause than is needed to put my pen in the ink.’

WHO RUNS THE WORLD?

SOPHIE MAGUIRE

Being born female means more than the XX chromosomes. It means you have won the reproduction battle and it means flying the flag for feminism and equality from the moment you take your first breath. Now is the time to win the gender war.

For generations our female ancestors faced huge inequities. They were forced to be submissive, denied the vote, paid less in the workplace and dismissed as ‘damsel-in-distress’- type characters whose role was homemaking and childbearing. Well, not any more. From Emily Pankhurst to Barbara, and from Mother Teresa to the late Margaret Thatcher, in recent times women have proved that we are strong, powerful and worthy, and that we have a voice worth listening to. These women paved the way for equality and freedom for their sisters and we owe it to them, and to ourselves, to continue their fight.

‘The weaker sex’, ‘less than her male counterpart’, throughout time we have been endlessly portrayed and constrained by such misogynistic claims. Yet history and biology both indicate that we are in fact far from the weak links in the chain.

But there is another way to celebrate being female, that doesn’t involve protests and political standpoints, or any deliberate flag-waving: music. ‘We’re clearly soldiers in

petticoats,’ sang the suffragettes in the Disney classic Mary Poppins, trailblazing the way for women to sing loud and proud. Then Helen Reddy crooned ‘I am woman: hear me roar’ – but the girl power didn’t stop there. Soul sister Gloria Gaynor, country songstress Shania Twain and pop sensations the Spice Girls are just a few other female artists who have used their lyrics to inspire women. But recently, if there is one musician who has dedicated her musical work to empowering women everywhere, it has to be Beyoncé.

“I am woman hear me roar”

The superstar is hell-bent on reminding the world that we are the stronger sex. Her lyrics ‘Boy, you know you love it how we’re smart enough to make these millions, Strong enough to bear the children, then get back to business’ show she really believes women can do it all, and she has continually championed us to be independent women throughout her reign as the Queen of Pop. Her father should take note; true to her word Beyoncé sacked him to manage herself in 2011.

Never underestimate us women and, to answer our title question, I’ll hand over to Beyoncé herself: ‘Who runs the world? Girls.’



THE C WORD

MARNI BANKS

It is a word I used to hide from, a word I would wince at, made inescapable by continuous appeal campaigns. As much as I knew it was a hard-hitting fact of life that was heavily affecting women everywhere, I would go out of my way to avoid thinking about the C word. This was until it tried to take my mother from me. 5 years ago, the woman I seek comfort from and love more than anything else, was diagnosed with breast cancer. I remember the evening we were told like it was last night; the haunting chill still creeps up on me. But now, 5 years on, I have learnt not to steer round breast cancer campaigns I see on the tube on my morning commute, I know not to avoid the lady wearing a head scarf. I have learnt not to be afraid. Yes, breast cancer is scary, yes there is not yet a guaranteed cure, and yes, it is affecting far too many women today (1 in 8 of us will develop the disease). That

having been said, having sat by my mother's side throughout her grueling course of treatment, I know the medical advances that are available today are allowing many women to beat the disease, 95% to be exact (Cancer Research UK). I am however equally aware that not everyone has a happy ending. So what are your options when faced with this life changing disease?

The recent news of Angelina Jolie's double mastectomy demonstrate that she is a brave and admirable woman, particularly as she has chosen to share her decision with the rest of the world, in the hope that other women will learn from her experience.

“1 in 8 of us will develop the disease”

As in Angelina's case, knowing you have an 85% chance of developing breast cancer, a double mastectomy is a decision the most courageous of women will make. The message this sends to other women in similar situations is very positive, and encourages women to take control over cancer. But is this an easy decision to make?

For me, we cannot live in fear of the C word. Angelina faced very high odds of developing

breast cancer when it was discovered she was carrying this gene, and she made this decision based on those facts. What concerns me, is that other women, in a state of fear and panic, without knowing their chances, might feel that a double mastectomy is the only way of ensuring that they too, will not develop the disease. If this happens, cancer will win. Like Angelina, all women can take control of their own situation.

“We cannot live in fear of the C word”

Awareness of the likelihood of carrying the gene and symptoms of the disease, along with regular self examination and observation of their breasts will ensure that they lessen their odds of cancer taking control of their lives.

The very campaigns I used to shy from are putting huge resources into raising money for extensive research, quality of treatment and centers of excellence, as well as support groups, all of which contribute to the 95% survival rate that we now can expect. On a personal level, my mum made it an imperative to keep positive and although I may not have believed it at the time, her attitude and strength helped to cure her and with it, my fear of the C word.

THE SOUND OF YOU

SOPHIE MAGUIRE

It was the first sound I recognised as a baby and over the years it has been stern and it has yelled. It has laughed along with me, and hushed away my fears, and been there to offer advice and kind words when needed. The voice of my mother soothes and calms, it reassures and validates. I would know that voice anywhere.

Although not distinctive, to me it is the sound of love; the sound of warmth and of safety. It lets me know I'm home and that I can achieve anything. It is a sound that both settles me and pushes me to do better. A voice that always accepts me, no matter what. I hope that in years to come, when I am old and she is gone, her voice will stay with me... that I will forever remember the sound of you.



Artwork by Genevieve Daetwyler

UNSPOKEN

WRITE AND YOU SHALL NEVER BE

FORGOTTEN

SOPHIE MAGUIRE

H ave you ever loved and lost someone? Someone you can never replace, someone who brightened up your world and made your life great? If the answer is yes, you will know that losing such a person leaves a void in your heart and an emptiness in your soul – an emptiness that will be yours to bear until you meet again. Although time may heal your pain, the scars of your loss will never fade and your heart aches in desperation for one last glimpse, one last word, one last day.

“Ramblings, poems and thoughts – her soul laid bare ”

I lost someone dear to me and it was the hardest thing I have ever been through. But as I refused to say goodbye and lose her forever, I was given something to help ease my suffering: her unsaid words, ramblings, poems and thoughts – her soul laid bare. Although she exists now only in my memories, I take comfort in the words she wrote while she was here. She is forever immortal through her writings – words that keep me strong and soothe the aching in my heart; words that bring her back to me.

LITTLE BLACK BOOK

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Bryony Fripp www.bryonyfripp.com bryonyfripp@hotmail.com	Katie Greenwood kgreenwood.tc@gmail.com	Surgery PR 16-17 Little Portland Street London W1W 8BP
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